



CONTACT

Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting
Church Multi-Centre Congregation

16 April 2023



From Rev Tom

Last week there was an article in the webzine “The Conversation” titled “The crucifixion gap: why it took hundreds of years for art to depict Jesus dying on the cross”. The article was written by Robyn Whitaker, the Associate Professor of New Testament, Pilgrim Theological College, University of Divinity. Robyn describes how many contemporary Christians, from bishops to ordinary folk, wear some kind of cross or crucifix around their neck and how it is rare to find a church that does not have at least one prominently displayed cross in, or on, the building. These days crosses are not just for the pious. The singer Madonna famously wore crucifix earrings and necklaces. The 2018 Net Gala’s theme, Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and Catholic Imagination, saw Jennifer Lopez wearing a provocative dress adorned with a cross stretched over her breasts. Whitaker tells us however, that the display of the cross by Christians didn’t take place till the 4th century. Part of the reason lies in the nature of crucifixion itself. “While crucifixion included some variety in antiquity, it was typically a form of execution reserved for non-elite, non-citizens in the 1st-century Roman Empire. Slaves, the poor, criminals and political protesters were crucified in their thousands for ‘crimes’ we might today consider minor offences.” The intent of the cross, as the victim was hung up stripped naked, was shame, and a display of Roman power over the bodies of the masses. “That Jesus suffered such an undignified death was an embarrassment to some early Christians.” Even as the likes of Paul recognise sacrificial meaning, the shame associated with this kind of death remained. The cross was only really embraced in the Reformation, when it was an empty cross, before it began to adorn churches, a demonstration of God’s power over death (rather than Rome’s authority over life!). The thing that really struck me about this information is how God in Jesus always undermines our grasping for the higher ground. As the disciples argued about who is going to sit closest to Jesus at his last meal, Jesus strips himself down and washes their feet. In like manner, as we outdo one another with a fervent dedication to displaying the biggest cross in the best place in our worship space, Jesus’ actual dying on a cross took more than 400 years for his followers to be sufficiently free from its humiliations to accept it as part of liturgical furniture. So now as the cross is more widely used as a symbol of Christian ecclesial power and of white supremacy, by groups like the Ku Klux Klan, Jesus has to accept onto himself all over again death for the sake of our sins as he walks the path of humility that few, if anyone, can follow. Just how much we use and abuse Jesus is exemplified in the words of Vladimir Putin in early 2022 as he goaded his soldiers into a heinous war, “there is no greater love than giving up one’s soul for one’s friends” (a paraphrase of John 15:13). Of course, the real intent of Jesus in saying these words was to give explanation to his disciples as to why he was going to die on a cross. Putin took a statement about the death of a victim of state violence and turned it into a rallying cry *for* state violence. These considerations make me realise, it is the days when I realise most my blindness to the love and wisdom of Jesus, that I am closest I ever am to understanding him.

In this and the last “Contact” is an invitation to write your spiritual autobiography. One member of the congregation went the extra step of emailing theirs to me. What a delight. I had tears reading the story of their journey of faith. What a wonderful gift to receive in my email.

DIARY

Thursday 13 April

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – Smelly Cheesecake Café at Charlestown Square
11.00am Garden Suburb Nursing Home Communion Service

Friday 14 April

- 6.00pm Ladies Night at Kahibah

Saturday 15 April

- 8.00am Men's Breakfast at Charlestown

Sunday 16 April – Easter 2

- 9.00am Worship Service – Leader & Preacher Rev Tom Stuart
Acts 2:14a, 22-32, Psalm 16, 1 Peter 1:3-9, John 20:19-31

Monday 17 April

- 10.00am Garden Suburb Nursing Home – Pastoral Care Visitation

Tuesday 18 April

- 9.00am Needlework n Natter
10.00am Morning tea in the Community – Frankie & Co Café at Lake Macquarie
7.00pm Stories: Hope and Possibilities with Tim Costello at Hamilton Uniting Church

Wednesday 19 April

- 9.30am Kid's Fun Day at Charlestown



Thursday 20 April

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – Smelly Cheesecake Café at Charlestown Square

Sunday 23 April – Easter 3

- 9.00am Worship Service – Leader Mike Smith – Preachers Ken, Anne & Tony
Acts 2:14a, 36-41, Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19, 1 Peter 1:17-23, Luke 24:13-35

Monday 24 April

- 2.00pm Anzac Church Service at Garden Suburb Aged Care Facility
Led by Cardiff RSL and Pastor Grahame Pricter

Tuesday 25 April – Anzac Day

Thursday 27 April

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – Smelly Cheesecake Café at Charlestown Square
1.30-2.30pm Bible Study at Garden Suburb

Sunday 30 April – Easter 4 – **FELLOWSHIP SUNDAY**

Acts 2:42-47, Psalm 23, 1 Peter 2:19-25, John 10:1-10

- 9.45am Morning tea
10.30am Worship Service in Hall – “How Are You Called?”
11.45am Lunch in hall



Sunday 30 April

- 9.45am - Morning Tea
10.30am - Worship Service
Shared Soup lunch to follow

Please bring a small plate of either sandwiches or slice/biscuits to share (as you are able).

THE PRAYER PAGE

And so I urge you: carry on an ongoing conversation with God about the daily stuff of life, a little like Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof. For now, do not worry about 'proper' praying, just talk to God."
Richard J. Foster



Pastoral Prayer Points

- * Jacqueline Fenwick and family following Bob's death
- * Peter Ferguson – in rehab. Pray that he will become stronger and the infection will be cured.
- * Isabella – infection, but in rehab
- * Janice Wright
- * Glenda O'Donahue
- * Linden
- * Eileen Dunn
- * Glenn, Donna and girls
- * Sue and Warren
- * Cat and Ezra
- * Enid Gaynor
- * John Booth and Gloria Booth
- * Tony and Nan
- * Mert and Pam
- * Judith and family
- * Ashley and Lorraine
- * Ken and Sharon MacDonald
- * Rhonda White and family (after death of Bert)
- * Enid Power
- * Fred Bryant
- * Max

Congregational Prayer Points

- Cathy Beeton and Holiday Kids
- Neos and Tom's role week by week
- Project Reconnect
- Worship Services
- Lease of Whitebridge property
- Cathy Beeton and SRE classes
- Worship Committee

Wider Community Prayer Points

- New state elected parliamentarians
- Victims of floods, earthquakes and fires
- Wilfreda's orphanage and dire circumstances in Kenya, affecting schooling and food affordability
- The situation in Ukraine and other trouble spots

Maintained by SFED and Enid Power



Children & Family Worker Update



Hi Everyone

Holiday Kids Club is on Wednesday the 19th April, please pray that we have a memorable and wonderful day with all who attend.

Cathy



A member of our congregation, Mike Smith, is seeking accommodation. If you can assist with this in any way please either contact Mike directly, or Rev. Tom

Bullet Proofing Yourself Against Depression

Depression is a serious and tricky illness

Unfortunately, it can also go unrecognized for a long period of time – often especially true for men.

People suffering with depression can become really good at covering the symptoms or making excuses. Some may not even realise that there's a problem. But 1 in 8 men will experience depression, and blokes make up an average seven out of every nine suicides every single day in Australia.

Learn about ways to “bullet-proof” yourself against depression: recognise the signs, get in early and make a difference, keep yourself staying more mentally healthy.

Gwenda Brownell (almost-retired psychologist) will help us understand how depression shows up differently in men, and present strategies that help with keeping the “black dog” away.

A Men's Breakfast

at Charlestown Uniting Church - 24 Milson St

8am Saturday 15th April

Cost \$12 RSVP: Paul Russell

pmraus74@gmail.com, or 0411 236 047

or sign-up sheet in the foyer.

Please advise of any special dietary requirements

By Wednesday 12th April 2023

Please do not attend if you are unwell or have been to a Covid-19 hotspot in the previous 14 days.



stories

Hope and Possibilities
a world in need : gambling reform

Tim Costello

with music from Heather Price

APRIL

18
2023

7pm Tuesday 18th April 2023

Hamilton Uniting Church

150 Beaumont St, Hamilton

Information m: 0407401833

e: ucahambro@bigpond.com

**ALL
WELCOME**



Hunter Presbytery of the Uniting Church

PRESBYTERY GATHERING 2023

THURSDAY 18 MAY

Morisset Uniting "Church in the Trees"

Corner Awaba and Kahibah Streets, Morisset

9.30 am - 2.00 pm

"LOOKING UP!"

Guest speaker

Flying Padre David Shrimpton



Featuring:

- Worship time with guest speaker David Shrimpton
- Collection point for knitted items for the needy
- Fashion parade from the Op Centre
- Time to browse and shop at the Op Centre
- Pickup from Morisset Station (Tel: Laraine 4973 1342)

Bring your own lunch. Tea and coffee provided

RSVP 11 May

Barbara duftybarb@gmail.com or 0439 002 392



Present

PUCCINI'S MASTERPIECE

La Boheme

Warners Bay Theatre

JUNE 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17

Starring

Ashlee Woodgate
Joshua Oxley
Tessa Hayward
Adrian LI Donni
Tristan Entwistle
Sheridan Oxley
Galatea Kneath
Ian Fisher
James Walker
Malcolm Young

Director

Stewart McGowan

Conductor

Christopher Bearman OAM

Music Director

Mercia Buck OAM

SUNG IN ENGLISH

Book tickets: stickytickets.com.au

Some of our Church Contacts:

Minister

Rev Tom Stuart

M: 0427 625 502

E: tom@thestuarts.id.au

Children & Families Resource Worker:

Mrs Cathy Beeton

M: 0409 445 933

E: Cath4858@gmail.com

Mrs Cathy Beeton is also our Safe Church Contact Person

Bank Account Details for the Charlestown Garden Suburb Multi-Centre Congregation:

Bank Account held with: Uniting Financial Services

Account Name: Charlestown Congregation General Account

BSB: 634 634 Account No.: 100030837

For Offering please put Ref: Offering

Keep up to date with happenings and info:

Webpage: <http://www.chagsuca.org.au>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/CharlestownUnitingChurch>

Project Reconnect: <http://www.projectreconnect.com.au>

Worship Services: <https://tinyurl.com/CHaGS-YouTube-Link>

Administration:

P: 4943 4019

E: office@charlestown.unitingchurch.org.au

24 Milson Street, Charlestown NSW 2290

PO Box 449, Charlestown NSW 2290

Spiritual Exercise - The Next Chapter - Spiritual Autobiography

Think about your spiritual progression through life as chapters of your spiritual autobiography. You don't need to write out each chapter. For the purposes of this exercise, giving each chapter an apt title is enough.

Chapter One describes the spiritual worldview into which you were born. If you were to give this chapter a title, what would it be? Now think about what happened next: did you go through a state of rebellion? Was there a time when you more fully embraced the beliefs into which you were born? Perhaps you found an alternate community that allowed you to deepen your experience of your faith?

Your book may be three chapters, ten chapters, or as many as you need to fully tell your story. How ever many chapters you choose, give each one a title and write it down.

Now, if you haven't done so already, add a last chapter to the book: your spiritual aspirations, hopes and beliefs about the future. Feel free to define "future" as you wish, to take you through to the end of life and beyond. You can simply give this a title or take the time to write out the chapter in full.

(See over for an example)

An example of the Spiritual Autobiography by Sue Warren.

I hope this will make clearer how you might do this exercise. Yours might be quite different, but in case you are unsure how to tackle the exercise, maybe this will help.

Chapter 1. The Groundwork to a Christian Biblical Worldview I was nurtured in faith by my family who were practising and devout Christians who took me to church each Sunday, Sunday school and who held Bible Study groups in their home. As we lived in country areas, we attended whatever denomination services were available, and so I had the benefit of a variety of perspectives- Methodist, Brethren, Baptist and Presbyterian. They all taught faithfully from the Bible and I loved learning Bible texts and hearing Bible Stories.

Chapter 2. Maturing in faith

At high school I attended Inter School Christian Fellowship, many Christian camps and leadership workshops which enabled me to explore my faith and search answers to my questions. I declared my faith and belief in God by being baptised at the age of seventeen.

Chapter 3. Exploring Faith

At University I linked up with organisations like SCM and EU which encouraged me to be able to express why I was a Christian and to reach out to fellow students endeavouring to understand the different worldviews expressed. At this stage of my life I really wanted to follow God's plan for my life as I married and chose a career in teaching. Christian Endeavour was a group both Mike and I had belonged to and the leaders and structure really nurtured our faith, encouraged us in prayer and leadership training. This group continues to be, even to this day, a special fellowship group where we share our faith.

Chapter 4. Family Life

Children were a blessing and made me very aware of our God-given responsibilities to nurture and encourage them in faith. It also brought many challenges, especially during teenage years, so prayer was a necessary tool in order to survive! Bible Study groups were a source of fellowship and important for continued development, growth and understanding of God's love and ways.

Chapter 5. Christian Schooling and Teaching.

I spent a wonderful 26 years teaching Christian values in Christian Schools where the subjects I taught were explored with a Christian focus. I attended conferences and workshops where incredible times of teaching and faith building were experienced. I still keep in touch with these colleagues and enjoy their fellowship.

Chapter 6. Trust God in All Circumstances Our Newcastle family grew to 10 living under one roof, my elderly mother had dementia, I took on Subject Coordinator role at work, there were increased responsibilities at Church and we experienced some medical issues. During this time I needed to put my trust in God daily and in hindsight, I can say He was faithful and sustained me.

Chapter 7. Contemplative practices.

In more recent times practices such as Lectio Divina, the Examen, Mindfulness, Meditation, Centering Prayer etc have expanded and enriched my expression of faith as well as participation in Contemplative services and Quiet Days. I have learnt to wait on God and to become more aware of God's presence in my life.

Chapter 8. Hopes and Dreams

Death is inevitable but because I believe in the gift of salvation and eternal life through faith in Jesus, I do not fear death. In the meantime, even though my physical and mental capacities may well reduce, I want to live life to the full, practising that each moment of my life is a moment with God. That causes me to be grateful that he loves me unconditionally, that I am not alone, that His peace is able to flood into my soul and it enables me to rejoice in the hope of eternity spent with my Heavenly Father.